

Abstract

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The overall aim of this study was to gain insight into municipal food distribution from several perspectives: that of the clients, mainly elderly people, and also from the perspectives of different professionals and decision makers. An action research approach was chosen, as the characteristics of this method were deemed to be correct in relation to the basic aim of the study. This thesis is based on four empirical studies. Study I aimed to explore various professionals' experiences of involvement in food distribution (FD) in order to get a comprehensive understanding of the organization, responsibilities and roles. The results showed that FD is a fragmentary intervention where a comprehensive perspective and clear roles of responsibility are lacking. Study II aimed to gain insight and to describe the experiences of home-living elderly people who receive hot meals distributed by their municipality. The results showed that there were feelings of dependency, and loneliness among the elderly participants, however they also expressed gratitude for the opportunity to have their meals delivered to their home. Study III aimed to describe how the professionals can identify needs for improvement and improve the municipal FD service to home living elderly people. The need to update and increase the FD recipient's knowledge in nutrition by sending information letters was found to be an important area to focus on. Evaluation of letters resulted in the decision to continue preparing and distributing information letters to all FD recipients twice a year and to make the information letters assessable on the websites of the six municipalities and county councils involved. Study IV aimed to describe the decision maker's views on FD and to report their suggestions for which areas reported from studies I-III should be taken into consideration as starting points to improve the municipal FD. The findings resulted in the decisions to monitor the elderly's health and wellbeing while providing FD and to increase the professionals' competence and to create a forum for inter-professional communication. In conclusion, this thesis illustrates that there is a necessity to identify the needs for general improvement of FD by involving the participants and to start out from their personal experiences and in their own context.

Keywords: Action Research, Facilitation, Food Distribution, Story Dialogue Method, Home-living Elderly People.

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